

THE Christian History;

Containing Accounts of the Propagation and Revival
of Religion in *Great Britain, America, &c.*

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Saturday SEPTEMBER 15. 1744. § N<sup>o</sup>. 81.  
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Extract from the Rev. Mr. Wilson continued.

IN the mean Time I take that for granted, which hath been (agreeably to plain and evident Scripture) the *acknowledged Doctrine of the Catholick Church*, however denied and derided by some late Innovators; viz. That the Holy Spirit of God is (according to Christ's own Promise) given to dwell in the Hearts of Christians, to beget and preserve spiritual Life in them, to conduct them in their Way, to strengthen them with Might in the inner Man, to shed abroad the Love of God in their Hearts, and witness their Adoption, to assist them in holy Services, and gradually to perfect the Work of Sanctification in them. † To spend many Words in proving this, which is already so clear to all unbiass'd Judgments, were to light a Candle before the Sun. As for that ridiculous Sense that some have endeavour'd to fasten upon these, or some of these Scriptures, as if they were to be understood only of the Spirit as given to the Church in common, and not to particular Christians, it is so utterly inconsistent with the scope of those respective Places, and runs so contrary to the whole stream of *Scripture* and *all Antiquity*, that I think it needless to waste Time in refuting it. He that will but considerately read over the several Places,

† Joh. 14. 20. Ch. 15. 26. 1 Joh. 3. last. Rom. 8. 9, 14. Psal. 143. 10. Eph. 3. 16. Rom. 8. 15. & V. 26, 27. Chap. 5. 5. 2 Cor. 3. 18. Eph. 5. 18, 19, 20. Ezek. 36. 26, 27.

and faithfully examine the Context, may easily see the Vanity of it. That of the learned *Grotius* is clear and full, *Not only the whole collective Body of the Faithful, but also particular Believers are rightly call'd the Temple* [of the Holy Ghost] *because the Spirit of God dwelleth in their Minds.* || And if those who are careful (according to the Apostles Counsel) not to quench the Spirit, but to stir up the Grace of God in them, have their Hearts more warm'd and enlarged in holy Duties, than others, who either want that Measure of Gifts, or are defective in improving them, I cannot conjecture why this should be made a Matter of Reproach, but that some Men are angry at every Thing that is not just of their own Size, or not suitable to their *Gust*; and therefore are resolved to revile and culluminate it, though by those Wounds the Heart and Life of Religion be found to lie a bleeding.

But let us hear what is further objected, to justify these Mens Prejudices.

Secondly, It is said by some, " These Heats are but the " frantick Freaks of a crazed Brain, and the product of a religious Frenzy.

I answer, 1. We need not be much moved with this senseless Charge, when we find the Pen-men of sacred Writ to have little better Measure made them by the same Hand. For of them we are told, that *they wrote many Times they knew not what, and gave forth Oracles, when they were beside themselves:* * (his Word is *alienata mente* :) which was one of the vile Positions of the *Montanists* and *Cataphrygians*, † rejected and condemned both by antient and modern Divines. And yet to justify this Assertion, our Author † gravely cites *Cicero de Divinatione*, calling the Raptures of their Pagan Vates by the Name of *Furor*; and *Virgil* calling *Sibylla* a *mad Prophetess*: and *Justin* the Historian, *Lib. 24.* where speaking of the much-fam'd Oracle at *Delphos*, he tells us of a very deep Cave in the Mount *Parnassus*, near *Apollo's* Temple, out of which proceeded a cool Air, which being driven upward by a certain Wind, did turn the Minds of the Prophets into Madnes;

|| Grot. Annot. ad Eph. 2. 22. * *Lud. Wolz. de Script. Int.* p. 126. † *V. Riveti Isagog. ad S. Scr. c. 2. Sect. 5. ubi super hac re citat. Hieronym. pro in Esaiam.* † *Censura Censuræ*, p. 131, 132.

who being thus inspired, were forced to give Responses to those who came to consult with the Oracle.

Wolzogen is much briefer in citing this of *Justin*, for he says no more out of him but this, *That the Minds of the Prophets were turned into madness, when they were filled with God.* But I have related it something more largely out of the Author himself, that the Reader may the better understand the Historians meaning. And is it not a goodly Piece of Service, and greatly for the honour of Religion, that a christian Writer should compare the temper of the Lord's Prophets, speaking by Inspiration from Heaven, to the fanatick Fury of those diabolical Prophets, that were evidently acted by a blast from Hell? He that hath so little Reverence for those Worthies, who were infallibly assisted in what they preach'd and wrote, as to speak thus reproachfully of them, no wonder if he trample upon the Servants of the same Lord now. But what do I speak of the Dishonour done to the Servants of God by a Man, that speaks so irreverently of God himself and his holy Word in many Passages throughout his Book? as is obvious enough to the View of every unbiass'd Reader.

2. Let it be consider'd, what Colour there can be for this Imputation, when the Persons thus charged are known to be sober and considerate, and in all their Discourses & Affairs as rational as other Men, and as composed every Way as any of those who thus traduce them. As therefore when some said blasphemously of our blessed Saviour, *He hath a Devil, and is mad, why hear ye him?* † Others made answer, *These are not the Words of him that hath a Devil.* As if they had said, *Men possess or mad do not speak after this Rate, or carry themselves after this Manner.* So may I say of those who are now reproach'd for Mad-men by a Generation of the same profane Temper; examine the Behaviour of those who are thus calumniated, observe their grave Deportment, their serious Discourse, their circumspect Carriage, their prudent Conduct of Affairs; and let sober Reason judge whether these be the Effects of Madneſs.

“ But, may some say, this is nothing. Men may have a partial or particular Madneſs, that takes them in some Things, while they remain sober in others. They may

† Joh. 10. 20, 21.

“ be very sedate and composed in their other Affairs, and
 “ yet in Matters of Religion they may be quite beside
 “ themselves.

For a Reply to this: 1. Be it so; then perhaps the Objectors may be as much concern'd in this as any others, and the Charge may be retorted upon themselves; though they speak and act like Men of Reason in other Things, yet it seems in Matters of Religion they may be mad. Let themselves look to it.

But, 2. We will not let it go thus. The Persons we are speaking of, and pleading for, are such as can and do give as intelligent an Account (whensoever required) as any other, of what they profess and practise in Matters of Religion, from the unerring Word of Truth. This they plead for; to this they appeal; by the Precepts of this they live; and in the Hopes of what is there promised, through the Grace of Christ, they resolve to die. And if this be the Cognifance and Character of Mad-men, then let us henceforth look for sober Persons no where but in Taverns, Play-Houses, and Bed-lams, and reckon all other for mad.

3. Many Instances might be given of those, who while, in the Days of their Vanity, they were Strangers to the Power and Life of Godliness, had the same contemptible Apprehensions of these Things, and have, with a Kind of Disdain, wonder'd what those Persons ail'd, whom they perceived to be zealously affected in Matters of Religion above the common Rate. But after they came to feel the perswasive Efficacy of that regenerating Grace, which some are bold to deride, changing their Hearts, they have seen Things with other Eyes, and with Indignation wonder'd at themselves, that they should be so slight and stupid in Matters of so infinite Concernment. I doubt not but St. *Paul*, while he was a persecuting Pharisee, wonder'd at the Christians, as a Company of Mad-men, for what they profess'd and did: But afterward, when his Eyes were open'd to see his Error, he counted himself no better than Mad for what he had formerly done against them. †

4. To which I may add, in the last Place, That many of those, who, in the Days of their Health and Jollity, have

† Act. 26. 11.

derided the Persons we speak of, for a Company of silly, distracted Fools; when a Death-Bed hath awaken'd their Conscience, and bro't them to a more sober Use of their Reason, & a more serious View of Eternity, have then changed their Minds, and heartily wish'd themselves of the Number of those whom they have formerly reproach'd, & would be glad to have some of their Oil to put into their own dying Lamps, before they were to engage in their last Conflict, & pass from hence into another World. But however, the Time is hastening, when these Calumniators will be sufficiently convinced of their Folly, and take their own Reproaches home to themselves; when that shall be fulfil'd that the Author of the Book of Wisdom tells us; † "That the righteous Man shall stand with great Boldness before the Face of such as have afflicted him, and made no Account of his Labours. When they see it, they shall be troubled with terrible Fear, and shall be amazed at the strangeness of his Salvation, so far beyond all that they looked for. And they repenting and groaning for anguish of Spirit, shall say within themselves, *This was he whom we had sometime in Derision, and a Proverb of Reproach: We Fools counted his Life madness, and his End to be without Honour. How is he numbred with the Children of God, and his Lot is among the Saints!*

S E C T. IV.

"But, may some say, there have been many Pretenders to the Spirit, both in former and latter Ages, who have abused the World.

1. Very true; and what will you conclude from thence? There likewise hath been, and are, many Pretenders to Learning and Honesty, who, by their cunning Sights and Artifices have deceived many. Is this any Prejudice to Learning and Honesty where they indeed are? Or must we resolve that these are no where to be found, because of such false Pretenders? Is this to argue like Men of Reason?

2. The Apostle tells us, That the Devil transforms himself into an Angel of Light, and teaches his Ministers the like Art of Imposture. It is one of his grand Methods of Deceit, to imitate in and by his Servants, the Operations of the Holy Spirit of Christ, that he may thereby cheat the World, and bring the true Workings

† Wisd. 5. 1, to 6.

of the Spirit of God into Suspicion and Disgrace : As in former Times he made use of *Apollonius Thyanaeus*, and others, to do strange Wonders, the better to discredit the true Miracles of Christ and his Apostles.

But, 3. Without further Debate, let Mens Fruits evidence by what Spirit they are acted. If Men be proud, boasters, self-admirers, scoffers at Holiness, fierce, unpeaceable, implacable, haters of those that are Good, greedy Prosecutors of this present World, &c. These, and such like, we are sure, are not led by the Spirit of Christ, but captivated by that unclean Spirit, that works effectually in the Children of Disobedience. But if I see in any the evident Fruits of the Spirit of God in Humility, Love, Meekness, Self-denial, Crucifixion to the World, and an heavenly Conversation ; I should be as loth to charge such with false Pretences, as I would be to fall under their Condemnation, who call Good Evil, and Evil Good.

“ But perhaps it will be further said, That Mens Fervency
 “ and Fluency in Exercises of Devotion, are made the
 “ *Heights of Godliness*, and mightily cried up as if they were
 “ the *whole of Religion*.

I answer ; It is past all Doubt that there are, among Persons of all Perswasions, some self-deceived Hypocrites, who place the *All* of Religion in Externals. Thus many among the Papists place their Religion in saying over so many Prayers, (though in a Language that they understand not) in going on Pilgrimage to the Image of this or that Saint, in using certain Rites prescribed them by their Guides, and performing the Penances enjoined them, and other such like outward Observances. And I doubt not but among Protestants there are too many (of several Perswasions) that place their Religion in being for this or that particular Way of Worship, different from others, and in the Practice of those Things, which are (at the best) but subservient Means, instrumentally conducing to express or excite the inward Devotion of the Heart, wherein the Life of Religion consists. But as they who thus do are in a miserable Mistake ; so who they are that do so, falls not under the Cognizance of any Mortal, unless they discover their Hypocrisy by their open Wickedness. Indeed whoever they be that take up with any (though the most plausible, costly, and labourious) Services of Religion, while they indulge themselves in their Sin, and walk in contrariety
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to Christ's Gospel; By the Grace whereof we are trained up to deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World, † (as I fear Multitudes do) such are self-condemned Hypocrites. But where there evidently appears a serious Care to credit the Truth profess'd by a suitable Conversation, by labouring to walk in all good Conscience towards God and towards Men; to censure such (whatsoever Perswasion they be of) for making any outward Exercises of Devotion, the all, or the chief of their Religion, is such a Piece of Uncharitableness, as is enough to nullify any Man's Religion in the World who so judgeth. Would Men be perswaded to dwell more at Home, and be better acquainted with searching their own Hearts, they would not be so ready to step into God's Throne, and take upon them to censure the Hearts of others, which none can have the immediate Inspection of, but that omniscient Spirit to whom all Secrets are open.

S E C T. V.

And the like Reply might serve to the last and bitterest Part of the Charge, viz. "That these Fervours and fluent Expressions in the Services of Religion, are made use of to drive on some ambitious Design, to get a Name in the World, that being cried up for Men divinely inspired, they may have the Advantage to get Power into their Hands, and rule all, and so fill the World with Schisms and Seditions. †

Ans. We are now come to the Bottom [of the Vessel, where we have the Dregs of the Adversaries Passion. It seems he would parallel those he thus bitterly calumniates with those Demagogues of old, who, by their bewitching Oratory charm'd the Hearts of the Vulgar, and thereby accomplish'd their own Ends upon them. For Answer to this, I shall say in the general, (as once one said in another Case,) *This is indeed a grievous Crime, if true; and as grievous a Calumny, if false.* More particularly, I shall reply these few Things.

1. The best Actions in the World are capable of being black'd and blemish'd by a malevolent Spirit, fastening the vilest Ends upon them. Holy Job, as upright as he was, (God himself bearing Witness thereto) yet was slander'd by the Devil, as

† Tit. 2. 11, 12. † Wolzog. loc. cit.

aiming at base unworthy Ends in all the Service he did for God. *Does Job serve God for nought.* And the like hath been the Lot of God's most faithful Servants in all Ages. When their Enemies knew not what Fault to find with their known and declared Actions, they would either feign some horrid Crime to accuse them of, or (more plausibly) make use of this malicious Artifice of the great Accuser of the Brethren, to blemish their most innocent Practices, as intended for a cunning Engine to carry on some base Design; by which Means they have endeavoured to raise Suspensions of them in the Minds of their jealous Governors, and enrage the Rulers of the World against them. Thus, when the Jews, after their return from Captivity, † were busy in rebuilding the City *Jerusalem*, in the Days of *Ezra* and *Nehemiah*, their Adversaries calumniate them for it, * as if they intended to rebel against the sovereign Powers that were over them. Our blessed Saviour and his Apostles were charged with Sedition for preaching the Gospel. And thus were the primitive Christians after them, accused by their pagan Persecutors for their religious Assemblies, as designed to practise Sedition, and hatch Mischief. Many such Instances might be given: But all Experience doth abundantly witness it, that the *wisest, holiest, and most commendable Works that ever were wrought by Men, are liable to be thus perverted by the cunning Malice of an embittered Enemy.*

The Calumny that we are to encounter, is so grossly senseless and irrational, that to any considerate and impartial Eye it overthrows it self. For whosoever he be that designs to insinuate himself into the Minds of Men for his own Advancement to rule over them, must use such Means for the Attainment of his Ends, as shall best comply with the Humour of the Multitude, and gratify them in what they best like. But this is evident, that the greatest Part of Men every where are at Enmity with all seriousness and fervency in Religion, and cry it down, as not suiting with their careless worldly Temper.

(To be finished in our next.)

† *Ezra* 4. 7, to 17. • *Neh.* 2. 19. ch. 6. 5, 6, 7.